



John L. Jackson

John L. Jackson's professional career serving Florida agriculture spanned more than five decades including 38 years as a county extension agent for the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in Central Florida. Jackson is highly regarded for his strong work ethic, ingenuity, and dedication to solving problems facing the industry. With a focus on research-based information, education and creativity, John Jackson's many contributions have left a positive and lasting impact on Florida agriculture.

Most notable of Jackson's achievements was the creation of two weather alert systems; Weather Watch and Florida Automated Weather Network (FAWN). Recognizing producers' need for accurate, real-time weather information, especially before and during freeze events, Jackson created Weather Watch in 1969. When the National Weather Service discontinued its agricultural weather forecasts in 1996, Jackson saw an opportunity to establish a state-wide weather information service for the agricultural community. And so, the Florida Automated Weather Network (FAWN) was born. Once Jackson convinced the state's Ag Weather Task Force to establish FAWN, he helped install the first 12 sites himself. He secured additional funding for a secondary phase consisting of 15 more sites, and then later developed a FAWN Cold Protection Tool Kit to aid producers during freezes. The FAWN weather system remains an invaluable tool for growers, saving millions of dollars annually and preserving billions of gallons of water.

Through Water Conserv II, Jackson lead the effort to get citrus growers to use reclaimed water for irrigation. He also helped establish the research arm of the effort, Mid Florida Citrus Foundation, to make sure there were no long term negative impacts. He served as the manager for more than 20 years.

For work his with Water Conserv II and FAWN, Jackson became the only Extension Agent in Florida to win the United States Department of Agriculture's distinguished Award for Superior Service twice, further evidence of Jackson's dedication, innovation and resourcefulness in service to Florida agriculture.

Jackson is also known for his creation of successful educational programs including Farm Safety Day, an annual equipment operator's school; OJ Grower meetings, a mainstay of information and grower networking for more than 35 years; and the 4-H Citrus Tree Project that introduced citrus to several thousand youth in Central Florida.

Jackson served four years as Director of the Florida Citrus Industry Research Coordinating Council, obtained four 24(c) pesticide labels to allow growers to apply low volume sprays, helped retain a USDA flavor chemist position in Florida, and organized visits with research administrators in Washington and Gainesville.

In retirement he organized a group of 'old citrus folks' known as the Mature Mentors, to whom he sends a periodic newsletter called 'In the Loop' and makes an effort to have frequent lunches with many of them.

Florida agriculture is grateful to Jackson for his service and commitment to our industry.